‘Gold ... hither swims’:
Trade and Literature in England of the 1650s

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Abstract
David Armitage has characterized the first British Empire as Protestant, commercial, maritime and free. Blair Hoxby has seen in the poetry of the 1650s the burgeoning of a positive conception of trade. Reading poems and entertainments written in the 1650s—Edmund Waller’s ‘A Panegyric to My Lord Protector’, William Davenant’s *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, and so on—this essay investigates further the discursive configuration surrounding trade. It argues that there were still other discourses and literary tropes than Armitage’s four that could be drawn on in describing the first Empire, and that among them trade was exceptional in that it was presented negatively, as something other than itself.

In *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (2000), David Armitage characterizes the first British Empire as Protestant, commercial, maritime and free. Supported by the arguments he makes concerning, among others, Richard Hakluyt (on Protestantism), John Selden (on the sovereignty of the seas), James Harrington (on freedom) and Charles Davenant (on trade), this thesis may seem convincing on the ground of intellectual history, Armitage’s home turf. As students of early modern English literature, however, we are tempted to ask: What about literature? Does Armitage’s thesis stand on the ground of literary history, too? Does the first British Empire appear in the contemporary literature again the same way, as Protestant, commercial, maritime and free? This is the first question.

Before we begin to address it, however, a note is in order regarding the long span of time Armitage’s study covers, from the 1540s (ch. 2, discussing the British composite monarchies) to the Walpolean era (ch. 7). It is not his contention that the first
Empire was Protestant, commercial, maritime and free from the start and all through its existence, but that it developed slowly and gradually along these lines. For instance, Armitage’s champions of commercialism came only after the Restoration, when trade had already been established as the key to national wealth and even connected with such positive concepts as liberty, peace and empire.³ Thus, Nicholas Barbon argued: ‘The Use of Trade is to make, and provide things Necessary: Or useful for the Support, Defence, Ease, Pleasure, and Pomp of Life’; ‘Trade ... doth not only bring Plenty, but hath occasioned Peace’; ‘Trade may be Assistant to the Inlarging of Empire; and if an Universal Empire, or Dominion of very Large Extent, can again be raised in the World, It seems more probable to be done by the Help of Trade’.⁴ This is Charles Davenant: ‘Industry has its first foundation in liberty: They who either are slaves, or who believe their freedoms precarious, can neither succeed in trade nor meliorate a country’.⁵ Panegyrics to the restored monarch, Charles II, and other poems of similar content, were also explicit in praising the riches he was expected to bring. At his coronation entry into the City, Charles was addressed thus: ‘Hail, Mighty Monarch! ... / Now with full Joy she [London] welcomes Your Return; / Your blest Return! by which she is restor’d / To all the Wealth remotest Lands afford’. Or, even more aggressively: ‘King Charles, great Neptune of the Main! / The Royal Navy rig, / And We’ll not care a Fig / For France, for France, the Netherlands, nor Spain. / ... / We’ll whip him [the Turk] like a Gig / About the Mediterrane, / His Gallies all sunk, or ta’ne. / We’ll seize on their Goods, and their Monies’.⁶

It was rather different before and under the early Stuarts, when the dominant values were those of the landed gentry, who held commercial activities in contempt. The desire for material wealth was something to be denigrated or played down at least.⁷ The expansionist literature of the period thus spoke of not trade but conversion of the heathen to Christianity, colonies as refuges for vagabonds and beggars, public good such as providing vent for surplus commodities and work for the unemployed, and the glory of the nation.⁸ In A Good Speed to Virginia (1609), Robert Gray recruits prospective colonists as follows:
[S]eeing there is neither preferment nor employment for all within the lists of our countrey, we might justly be accounted ... both imprudent and improudent, if we will yet sit with our armes fouled in our bosomes, and not rather seeke after such adventures whereby the glory of God may be advanced, the territories of our Kingdome inlarged, our people both preferred and employed abroad, our wants supplyed at home, his Maiesties customes wonderfully augmented, and the honour and renown of our Nation spread and propagated to the ends of the world.

[I]t is euerie mans dutie to travell both by sea and land, and to venture either with his person or with his purse, to bring the barbarous and sauage people to a ciuill and Christian kinde of gouernment, vnder which they may learne how to liue holily, iustly, and soberly in this world, and to apprehend the meanes to saue their soules in the world to come.⁹

On the other hand, Gray has this damning comment on all commercial enterprises: 'they which preferre their money before vertue, their pleasure before honour, and their sensuall securitie before heroical aventures, shall perish with their money, die with their pleasures, and be buried in euerlasting forgetfulness'.¹⁰

The decisive change to this trend came in 1649 with the English Republic, whose leaders recognized 'the profit & emolument that accures to this Commonwealth' by trade and 'our special obligation and Interest to promote and further the same'. For those that now came into power, especially for 'imperialist republicans' like Thomas Scot, Thomas Chaloner and Henry Marten, and for those merchant MPs who had come to Parliament as recruiters since 1645, it was evident 'Of what necessity & advantage to the generall State of humane society a free & full & mutuall commerce is'.¹¹ This was especially so, as the English Republic came into being in the midst of the century's worst trade depression and three years of disastrous harvests.¹² Thus, in 1650, the Rump Parliament established the Council of Trade as a standing council for ordering and regulating commerce, and pursued attentive and aggressive commercial policies, including the Navigation Act of 1651 and the first Anglo-Dutch War of the following year.¹³
It is the literary writings of this period that I think most interesting and worth our investigation. The English Republic not only saw a radical change in the view of commercial activities, but also produced many works that were quite characteristic in their representations of both such activities and the desire behind them for wealth. Literary critics have not paid enough attention to these representations, not enough for their significance in literary history to come to light. Reference to literature is naturally sparse in Armitage, an intellectual historian. In his *Mammon's Music* (2002), Blair Hoxby analyses several poems from this period, such as the one accompanying *Of Dominion, or Ownership of the Sea* (1652; Marchamont Nedham's translation of John Selden's *Mare Clausum*) and Edmund Waller's 'Panegyric to My Lord Protector' (1655), but his arguments are focused on the simple fact that poets began to sing favourably about trade in this period. In other words, although Hoxby has made it clear that trade began to receive positive poetical representations under the Republic, which certainly is no small contribution to our understanding of the literature of the period, yet he stops there, not going further to ask *how*. Precisely, this is my second question: How did literary writers represent trade in such a transitional period? What kind of rhetoric or discourse was available for them to draw on when they spoke about commercial activities and the motives that lay behind them? This inquiry I hope will make clear the exceptional position that trade occupied in the discursive configuration in England of the 1650s, especially in relation to Armitage's other three discourses characterizing the first Empire: Protestantism, maritime dominance, and liberty. There are still other aspects of the first Empire than those which Armitage and Hoxby have discovered.

1. 'Gold ... hither swims': The Rhetoric of *Sponte Sua*

In his 'Panegyric to My Lord Protector' (1655), Edmund Waller boasts of the riches the people are enjoying under the Protectorate:

Our little world ...

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Of her own growth has all that Nature craves;
And all that's rare, as tribute from the waves.

The taste of hot Arabia's spice we know,
Free from the scorching sun that makes it grow;
Without the worm, in Persian silks we shine;
And, without planting, drink of every vine.

To dig for wealth we weary not our limbs;
Gold, though the heaviest metal, hither swims;
Ours is the harvest where the Indians mow;
We plough the deep, and reap what others sow.
(Lines 49, 51-52, 57-64)\(^{15}\)

The tributary seas present England with Arabian spice, Persian silk, European and north African wine\(^{16}\) and even American gold, all of which the people enjoy without wearying their limbs—this is a variation of the rhetoric of *sponte sua* (’spontaneously’, ’of its own accord’), which originates in classics like Virgil’s *Georgics* and Martial’s *Epigrams*. *The Georgics* sings of plants that grow of themselves: ‘Trees that of free will [*sponte sua*] lift themselves into realms of light spring up unfruitful, but rejoicing in their strength, for within the soil is native force’; ‘Fruit-trees, too, so soon as they feel their stems firm, and come to their strength, swiftly push forth skyward with inborn force, needing no help from us’ (bk. 2, lines 47ff., 426ff.).\(^{17}\) Martial transfers the rhetoric onto fishery: ‘The line seeks not its prey in the distant sea, but the fish, descried from above, draws down the cord cast from bed or couch.... [T]he fishpond feeds turbot and home-reared bass; to its master’s call swims the dainty mullet; the usher summons a favourite grey mullet, and, bidden to appear, aged surmullets put forth their heads’ (bk. 10, Epigram XXX).\(^{18}\)

This rhetoric was passed on to English literature via country house poems of the seventeenth century, which, paying homage to the fecundity of the country estates of aristocrats, praise their magnanimity, hospitality and generosity towards the people living around and working for them.\(^{19}\) Thus, in Ben Jonson’s poem ‘To Penshurst’, ‘The lower
land … / Thy sheepe, thy bullocks, kine, and calues doe feed’; ‘The middle grounds thy mares and horses breed’; and ‘the topps … / To crowne thy open table, doth prouide / The purpled pheasant, with the speckled side’. The poet further sings, going beyond Martial: ‘The painted partrich … for thy messe, is willing to be kill’d’; ‘Fat, aged carps … runne into thy net’; ‘pikes … / As loth, the second draught, or cast to stay, / Officiously, at first, theirsmelves betray’; and ‘Bright eels … leape on land, / Before the fisher, or into his hand’ (lines 22-38). Similarly, joining this cheerfully cruel trope to Biblical imagery, Thomas Carew sings in ‘To Saxham’: ‘The Pheasant, Partiridge, and the Larke, / Flew to thy house, as to the Arke, / The willing Oxe, of himselfe came / Home to the slaughter, with the Lambe, / And every beast did thither bring / Himselfe, to be an offering, / The scalie herd, more pleasure tooke, / Bath’d in thy dish, then in the brooke’ (lines 21-28).

Raymond Williams famously pointed out in The Country and the City that such rhetoric obliterates labourers and hence labour itself—‘this magical extraction of the curse of labour’, as he called it. Before coming to the dinner table, animals have to be reared, killed and prepared as meat; birds have to be trapped or shot and fish caught; fruit trees have to be planted, manured, pruned and the fruit harvested. In the returned Golden Age or the second Eden of country house poetry, however, all such work is invisible, for these things are described as growing and coming to the table spontaneously. The feudal relationship between the lord and his tenants is all but forgotten beside the praise of his estate’s fecundity.

Returning to Waller, what is he doing when he transfers this *sponte sua* rhetoric from the feudal environment to the one of overseas trade? Of course, he is obliterating the quasi-feudal relationship between the lord England and its vassal countries, and with it, the work of merchants as the intermediate agency between them. In other words, labour and trade are rendered invisible by regarding foreign products as arriving spontaneously, by not mentioning how spice, silk, wine and gold are produced and transported to England. Historically such rhetoric was convenient indeed, because trade was actually more than trade in this period, involving all those unseemly activities which the process of ‘ploughing the deep’ and ‘reaping what others sow’ required: maritime violence
like plundering and privateering, trade in, and use of, slaves, and so on. The felicitous rhetorical stroke of *sponte sua* brushes away trade and whatever wrong has been done by it.

II. Spanish Tyranny / English Liberty

England’s desire for riches could be transferred onto its rival countries or enemies, especially Spain, which had already gained many colonies in the new world and thus provided England with not only a model to be followed and even ready-made colonies to be seized, but also a target of moral attack as greedy and cruel in its pursuit of wealth. Such ambivalent rivalry with Spain dated back to the days of Elizabeth I, when adventurers like Humphrey Gilbert and his half-brother Walter Ralegh at once denounced Spanish atrocities and sought to take over its colonies. Citing Bartolomé de las Casas’s *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (1552; translated into English in 1583 from a French version), Richard Hakluyt, too, had this to say: ‘the spanishe ... have not don ... these 40. yeres be paste, neither yet doo at this presente, oughte els, then teare [the Indians] in peces, kill them, martir them, afflicte them, tormente them, and destroye them by straunge sortes of cruelties, never either seene or reade or hearde of the like’. After half a century of Stuart pacifism, this aggressive stance returned in the 1650s with another translation of las Casas’s *Brevísima Relación* (*The Tears of the Indians: Being an Historical and True Account of the Cruel Massacres and Slaughters of Above Twenty Millions of Innocent People; Committed by the Spaniards*, 1656), and with the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, who carried out the so-called ‘Western Design’ (1654-55), sending a fleet to the West Indies to seize Spanish colonies. To the commissioners for the expedition he paints the same dark picture of Spanish cruelty:

Wee also hold our self Obliged in Justice to the People of these Nations for the Cruelties, Wrongs, and Injuries done and exercised vpon them by the Spaniards in those parts [i.e., the West Indies]. Haueing a respect likewise in this our undertakings to the Miserable Thraldome and Bondage, both Spirituall and Civill, which the natives and others in the Dominions of the said King in America are subiected to and
lye vnder by meanes of the Popish and cruell Inquisition and otherwise, from which if it shall please God to make us instrumentall in any measure to deliver them ... Wee shall esteeme it the best and most Glorious part of any Successse or Acquisition it shall please God to blesse us with.  

It is this military expedition that triggered the Anglo-Spanish war of 1655-60, in waging which Cromwell got still more heated, telling his second Parliament: ‘Why, truly, your great enemy is the Spaniard. He is. He is a natural enemy, he is naturally so’.

Taking their cue from such government policies, writers of the 1650s could construct English identity as being opposite to demonized Spain, as free from greed and liberating those suffering from Spanish tyranny. Thus, Edmund Waller sings ‘Of a War with Spain, and a Fight at Sea’ (1658): ‘Of nature’s bounty men [i.e., Americans] forebore to taste, / And the best portion of the earth lay waste’, because Spain had robbed them of all such bounty. Especially culpable is its greed for American gold and silver, which ‘Came, like a tempest, to confound the old’, that is, to finance the wars Spain waged in Europe (lines 5-8). On the other hand, England (or Britain, as Waller terms it, presumably in order to emphasize the [actually volatile] unity of the three kingdoms after Cromwell’s victories over Ireland and Scotland),

looking with a just disdain
Upon this gilded majesty of Spain,
And knowing well that empire must decline,
Whose chief support and sinews are of coin,
Our nation’s solid virtue did oppose
To the rich troublers of the world’s repose.
(Lines 13-18)

The ‘fight at sea’ in question is the one at Cadiz on 9 September 1656, in which Richard Stayner surprised seven Spanish ships from the West Indies (and a Portuguese one captured on the way). The attack was successful, as Waller shows when he enthuses
eloquently over the Spanish ships burnt and sunk with their golden cargo:

Some [ships], we made prize; while others, burned and rent,
With their rich lading to the bottom went;
Down sinks at once (so Fortune with us sports!)
The pay of armies, and the pride of courts.
Vain man! whose rage buries as low that store,
As avarice had digged for it before;
What earth, in her dark bowls, could not keep
From greedy hands, lies safer in the deep,
Where Thetis kindly does from mortals hide
Those seeds of luxury, debate, and pride.
(Lines 65-74)

Gold is harmful to man, bringing only 'luxury, debate, and pride'. Spanish vanity unearthed it, but the virtuous English have buried it deep down in the sea again—congratulations!

Let us not be deceived, however. As the first half of line 65 shows, the English fleet actually captured a couple of ships, one laden with 'Twelve thousand West-India hides, and some quantities of Sugar' and the other with two million pieces of eight, which roughly amounted to £240,000.\textsuperscript{28} They wanted, and could indeed have seized, more. One of the ships 'burnt and rent' had 'Sugar, Tobacco and Plate, to the value of Six hundred thousand Pieces of Eight', and another 'Six hundred thousand Pieces of Eight; besides, in Jewels and Plate ... to the value of Five hundred thousand Pieces of Eight'. The fleet once captured them, but the former accidentally caught fire and sank, while the latter was 'set on fire by the Spaniards themselves, and so burnt down and sunk'.\textsuperscript{29} Clearly it was not the intention of the English to bury the riches from the New World; they would have seized them, if they could have. The English were thus not free from the desire for wealth, which Waller camouflages with plausible words of indignation over gold and greed.

English liberty as opposed to Spanish tyranny is the theme of both The Cruelty of
the Spaniards in Peru (1658) and The History of Sir Francis Drake (1659) by William Davenant, the father of the above-mentioned commercial thinker Charles Davenant. The Cruelty of the Spaniards is a hybrid entertainment comprising scenery, music, dance, songs, poetical speeches and acrobatic performances (like dancing on a tight rope). The plot (or ‘device’ in the style of the Stuart court masque) consists of the internal dissension in Peru, its subsequent subjection to the Spanish, and the prophesied release by the English—‘prophesied’, because the latter had not yet reached Peru when the entertainment was produced. As the Peruvian priest of the sun foresees:

When first the valiant English landed here,
Our reason then no more was ruled by fear:
They straight the Spaniards’ riddle did unfold,
Whose heaven in caverns lies, of others’ gold.
Our griefs are past, and we shall cease to mourn
For those whom the insulting Spaniards scorn,
And slaves esteem,
The English soon shall free;
Whilst we the Spaniards see
Digging for them.
(Sixth entry, lines 28-37)

The Peruvians congratulate themselves on their release from Spanish rule: ‘After all our disasters, / The proud Spaniards our masters, / When we extol our liberty by feasts, / At table shall serve, / Or else they shall starve; / Whilst the English shall sit and rule as our guests’ (sixth entry, lines 69-74).

Heaven for the Spanish is located underground, ‘in cavern ... of others’ gold’, and in order to get there, they torture the natives: at the beginning of the fifth entry, ‘farther to the view are discerned racks and other engines of torment, with which the Spaniards are tormenting the natives and English mariners.... Two Spaniards are likewise discovered ... the one turning a spit, whilst the other is basting an Indian prince, which is roasted
at an artificial fire' (fifth entry, lines 2-9). The Spanish torture the Peruvians simply for the pleasure of tormenting them: 'These [the Spanish] study arts of lengthening languishment, / And strengthening those for pains whom pain hath spent. / They make the cramp, by waters drilled, to seize / Men ready to expire, / Baste them with drops of fire, / And then they lay them on the rack for ease' (fifth entry, lines 13-18). From such tyranny and atrocity the English will free the Peruvians.

Or, will they? It is uncertain: for the Peruvians, the change would be one from tyranny to benevolent rule at best, and not a total release from subjection. It is only that 'the English shall sit and rule as our guests' instead of the Spanish. Besides, what will become of the gold? It will not lie hidden, as Waller would recommend, but still be sought out, going to the English this time: the Peruvians will 'the Spaniards see / Digging for them [the English]'. Thus, the liberty the English will bring to Peru is not liberty at all: Peruvians will remain in subjection, with their riches still taken away from them. The discourse of liberty is nothing but a pretext for the English to dominate over the Peruvians and grab their riches.32

The History of Sir Francis Drake (1659) is written in the same language condemning the Spanish and idealizing the English. Planning a raid on a Spanish mule train, Drake explains his goal: 'Afford me guides to lead my bold / Victorious seamen to their gold: / For nothing can afflict them more, / Than to deprive them of that store / With which from hence they furnished are / To afflict the peaceful world with war' (second entry, lines 89-94).33 He is seeking only to inflict damage on the Spanish and thus to achieve fame for his country. Snatching their gold is nothing more than a means for doing so: 'I despise / That treasure which I now would make your prize: / Unworthy 'tis to be your chiepest aim. / For this attempt is not for gold, but fame' (sixth entry, lines 25-28).34 English rule will also bring liberty: 'such as to our power submit / May take delight to cherish it, / And seem as free as those whom they shall serve' (third entry, lines 52-54).

All this might sound plausible and fair, but actually the outcome is much the same as in The Cruelty of the Spaniards. After all, it is the English that will possess gold and dominate over people: the native Americans, the Symerons, and the surrendering Spanish. When the Peruvians happily declare, 'The lord of the sea is welcome to land, / And here
shall command / All our wealth and our arms, / For his name more alarms / The Spaniards
than trumpets or drums: / Hark how they cry, Drake comes, Drake comes!’ (third
entry, lines 67-72), the underlying logic is disarmingly simple: military strength leads to
dominion over people and riches. Again the language of virtue and liberty is a mere cloak
to cover up the desire for wealth and domination.\footnote{35}

III. Spectacles of Battle

There are still other ways to disguise the desire for wealth. Another such is to foreground
spectacles of battle so as to obscure their gainful intentions. One example is, again,
Edmund Waller’s ‘Of a War with Spain’, in which the aim of the fight, seizure of Spanish
ships and their American riches, is cast in the shade by vivid pictures of the fight. This
trick is achieved in two stages. First the poet (with free revisions) paints a picture of the
death of ‘the noblest of our enemies’, the Marquis of Badajos (‘Badex’ or ‘Baydex’
in the contemporary accounts). Sending ‘Out from his flaming ship his children ... / To
perish in a milder element’, the Marquis ‘laid him[self] by his burning lady’s side, / And,
since he could not save her, with her died’ (lines 79-82). Such a tragic end for the
dying couple is rendered the more dramatic with the backdrop of burning treasures, and
by means of the poet’s witty narration: ‘Spices and gums about them melting fry, / And,
phoenix-like, in that rich nest they die; / Alive, in flames of equal love they burned, / And
now together are to ashes turned’ (lines 83-86).\footnote{36}

Next the poet turns to the English soldiers: ‘These dying lovers, and their floating
sons, / Suspend the fight, and silence all our guns; / Beauty and youth about to perish, finds / Such noble pity in brave English minds, / That (the rich spoil forgot, their valour’s prize)
/ All labour now to save their enemies’ (lines 89-94). The English are brave in fight and
noble in pity: seeing the pitiful end of the Spanish family, they promptly quit the fight in
order to help them. The poet continues: ‘They that but now for honour, and for plate, / Made the sea blush with blood, resign their hate; / And, their young foes endeavouring to
retrieve, / With greater hazard than they fought, they dive’ (lines 97-100). The soldiers
have risked their lives in the honourable fight, and now they do so in a nobler act of
friendship even toward their enemies.
Scattered through these pictures of tragic death and noble pity, it must be noted, are phrases that reveal the real object of the fight, ‘rich spoil’ and ‘plate’, but characteristically this is not stated directly or positively. This not-so-noble goal of the fight is not only obscured by the emphasis on the soldiers’ noble behaviour but also suspended, to the effect that ‘the rich spoil [is] forgot’ and the fight for plate ‘resigned’. The material side of the war is, and presumably can be, represented only to be denied, only as something to be negated.

Spectacles of battle need not necessarily be noble or tragic to be a cloak to cover up the desire for wealth. Witty and vivid descriptions, and even shockingly gory ones, can as well catch our eyes and arrest our minds for their sensationalism, thus diverting us from the gainful purpose for fighting—a little like, say, today’s splatter movies, which entertain the audience not so much with their stories or morals as with their bloody (and almost sublime?) images. Thus, ‘On the Victory Obtained by Blake over the Spaniards’ (1657) presents the ruthless fact of violent death in battle both objectively and eloquently, with a bit of out-of-place humour: ‘Thousands of ways, thousands of men there die, / Some ships are sunk, some blown up in the sky. / Nature ne’er made cedars so high aspire, / As oaks did then, urged by the active fire’ (lines 127-30); ‘Torn limbs some leagues into the island fly, / Whilst others lower, in the sea do lie. /Scarce souls from bodies severed are so far, / By death, as bodies there were by the war’ (lines 133-36). Ships exploded and blown up to the sky, soldiers killed in thousands, and their arms and legs torn far apart in a moment—these images are so overwhelming and awe-inspiring that they prevent us from considering why they are fighting in the first place.

IV. Chivalry
The language of chivalry, too, could embellish the fights for wealth. Once again in Davenant’s *History of Sir Francis Drake*, the former slaves of the Spaniards, the Symerons, attempt revenge by ravishing a Spanish couple at their wedding, and are caught tying the bride to a tree. The Symerons there ‘Much more than fury show; / For they have all those cruelties expressed / That Spanish pride could e’er provoke from them / Or Moorish malice can revenge esteem’ (fifth entry, lines 105-8). Told of this
outrage, Drake does not commend it as an assault on the enemy. Far from condoning it, he promptly decides to attack the Symerons for their breach of the chivalric code, which enshrines knightly honour and the love of beautiful ladies:

Arm! arm! the honour of my nation turns  
To shame, when an afflicted beauty mourns.  
Though here these cruel Symerons exceed  
Our number, yet they are too few to bleed  
When honour must revengeful be  
For this affront to love and me.  
(Fifth entry, lines 109-14)

As Captain Rouse (the historical James Rause, who actually parted company with Drake before the 1573 raid on a mule train\textsuperscript{39}) notes, ‘beauty’s noble cause’ must come before the enmity against the Spanish or the envy of their riches, ‘If poets may authentic be’. Pedro, the Symeron guide serving Drake, pleads for mercy on the ground that it is the Spanish themselves that ‘midst the triumphs of our nuptial feasts, / Have forced our brides and slaughtered our guests’. But still, love’s cause stands firm, as Drake says: ‘The gentle sex must still be free. / No length of studied torments shall suffice / To punish all unmanly cruelties’. Thus, Drake’s seamen march on ‘For sea-born Venus’ sake’, to punish the offenders: Drake is not just a seadog but a knightly champion of love and honour (fifth entry, lines 121-22, 154-55, 161-63).\textsuperscript{40}

Although written after the Restoration, Waller’s ‘Instructions to a Painter’ (1666) provides another example, the background being the Second Anglo-Dutch War. Just before the famed battle of Lowestoft, the English fleet resorts to Harwich for necessary supplies, and there the soldiers ‘meet the beauties of the British Court’, Anne the wife of the Duke of York and her attendants (line 80). The poet sings of the rendezvous in the language of mythical romance, comparing Anne to Thetis and even Aphrodite:

Th’ illustrious Duchess, and her glorious train,
(Like Thetis with her nymphs) adorn the main.
The gazing sea-gods, since the Paphian Queen
Sprung from among them, no such sight had seen.
Charmed with the graces of a troop so fair,
Those deathless powers for us themselves declare,
Resolved the aid of Neptune's court to bring,
And help the nation where such beauties spring;
The soldier here his wasted store supplies,
And takes new valour from the ladies' eyes.
(Lines 81-90)

Sea-gods, enamoured with the beauties, fight for the English fleet. The soldiers, infused with renewed courage by the ladies' eyes, will fight the more valiantly. Depicted thus in the language of romance, a battle for prosaic purposes—blocking Dutch ports and capturing their ships—is elevated into a noble one conducted by knights both mortal and immortal for their beloved ladies.

V. Conclusion
Thus, in the literary writings of the 1650s, trade and its driving force, the desire for wealth, are not represented as what they are but covered up, obscured, and sugar-coated by a variety of rhetorical tropes and discourses: the rhetoric of *sponte sua*, condemnation and idealization respectively of the Spanish and the English (which might roughly be termed 'Protestantism'), the discourse of liberty, dramatic narration of battles, and the language of chivalry.

Now let us return to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay. Concerning David Armitage's four discourses characterizing the first British Empire—Protestantism, trade, maritime dominance, and liberty—I contend:

1. In the field of literature, these four discourses were clearly not the only ones that were employed to describe and characterize the first Empire. Literary
traditions also provided early modern writers with the *sponte sua* rhetoric from the classics, the language of chivalry from the romance genre, and dramatic narrations peculiar to imaginative literature. If anything, the first Empire was more colourfully portrayed in literary works than in political/commercial tracts. There were in literature more, and in a sense richer, ways to conceptualize it.

2. Far more significant is the fact that among Armitage’s four discourses, only that of trade is presented negatively in the literature of the 1650s. Anti-Spanish sentiment (Protestantism), the military strength of the fleets, and liberty are all presented positively, each of them as something of which the people can be proud, while trade is not. The latter, to repeat, is covered up, obscured and sugar-coated by a variety of rhetorical tropes and discourses. All this testifies to the fact that there existed in the mid-seventeenth century a more complicated discursive configuration concerning the first Empire than the one described by Armitage. The discursive map was not simply one of Protestantism, trade, maritime dominance and liberty coexisting side-by-side; rather, Protestantism, maritime dominance and liberty (not to mention the literary tropes examined above) all disguised trade and its driving force, the desire for riches.

Moreover, we are led to modify Hoxby’s argument that poets began to sing about trade in the 1650s. They did so, to be sure, but they actually sang of trade paradoxically by singing about other things. In this sense this period was precisely one of transition, from the gentlemanly contempt for trade in the pre-Civil War period to the Restoration’s open acceptance and exaltation of it as a pillar of the nation. The poets, in their attempts to represent trade positively, could as yet extol it only negatively.
Notes

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2 Armitage himself addresses the relationship between literature and imperialism in his 'Literature and Empire', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), The Origins of Empire (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), pp. 99-123. There, however, he deals only with empire in general and not particularly with the first British Empire, thus leaving his four discourses out of consideration.
3 Cf. the defences of the East Indian trade in the early seventeenth century, which were defences of that trade only and not trade in general: [Dudley Digges], The Defence of Trade in a Letter to Sir Thomas Smith Smith Knight, Governoir of the East-India Companie, &c. (London, 1615); T[homas] M[un], A Discourse of Trade, from England unto the East-Indies: Answering to Diverse Objections Which Are Usually Made against the Same (London, 1621). The latter says in passing, though, that 'The trade of Merchandize, is not onely that laudable practice wherby the entercourse of Nations is so worthily performed, but also ... the verie touchstone of a kingdomes prosperitie' (p. 1).
10 Gray, sig. A3v-A4r. See also W[illiam] Crashaw, A Sermon Preached in London before the Right Honorable the Lord Lavvarre, Lord Gouvernoir and Captaine General of Virginia (London, 1610); and A True and Sincere Declaration of the Purpose and Ends of the Plantation Begun in Virginia (London, 1610). It may be worth reminding ourselves that the most famous merchants in English literature at the turn of the seventeenth century are Marlowe's Barabas and Shakespeare's Shylock, both greedy Jewish money-mongers, suggesting that the pursuit of wealth is not compatible with either the literary good or English identity. See also David Quint, Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993), ch. 6, for the antithetical relationship between trade and the epic genre.
'Gold ... hither swims': Trade and Literature in England of the 1650s

12 Hoxby, p. 63.
14 Hoxby, pp. 62-74.
15 G. Thorn Drury (ed.), The Poems of Edmund Waller, 2 vols. (London: Bullen, 1901), ii, pp. 10-17. All subsequent quotations from Waller’s poems are taken from this edition.
28 A True Narrative of the Late Success Which It Hath Pleased God to Give to Some Part of the Fleet of This Common-Wealth upon the Spanish Coast, against the King of Spain’s West-India Fleet in Its Return to Cadiz (London, 1656), p. 3; Thomas Birch (ed.), A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, 7 vols. (London, 1742), v, p. 399; Charles Harding Firth, The Last Years of the Protectorate, 1656-1658, 2 vols. (New York: Russell, 1964), i, ch. 2. The exchange rate is Firth’s: see Last Years, i, pp. 55-56. 240,000 pounds’ worth of silver was a disappointment, as it had been rumoured that the value of the prizes would be £600,000.
29 *True Narrative*, p. 3.

30 Both entertainments are in Janet Clare (ed.), *Drama of the English Republic, 1649-60* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), pp. 235-61 and 263-94, respectively. All quotations from these entertainments are taken from this edition.


33 This is an episode from Drake’s voyage in 1572-73. See Philip Nichols, *Sir Francis Drake Reviued: Calling upon This Dull or Effeminate Age, to Followe His Noble Steps for Golde & Siluer* (London, 1626); John Cummins, *Francis Drake: The Lives of a Hero* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1995), ch. 5; Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen’s Pirate* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), ch. 3.

34 In Nichols, Drake’s attitude toward the riches is more ambiguous: see the phrase in the title ‘His Noble Steps for Golde & Siluer’, ‘noble steps’ and ‘gold and silver’ embodying a contradiction. See also p. 35, where Drake, in his first meeting with the Symerons, ‘moved them, to shew him the meanes which they had to furnish him with gold and siluer’. In this narrative as a whole, however, the desire is attributed to common soldiers. In one episode, Drake catches them complaining about the difficulty of capturing a Spanish town and reprimands them: ‘he had brought them to the mouth of the treasure of the world, [and] if they would want it, they might henceforth blame no body but themselves’ (p. 16).

35 In a sense this language of virtue and liberty has similar functions as the *sponte sua* rhetoric. What comes spontaneously here is not food or gold, but people who serve the English. The process by which the natives are reduced to subjection is removed from our view by picturing them as willing servants.

36 Very probably, spices here are borrowed from the East Indian trade for their exotic connotations, as they were not among the chief items coming from America. See also Birch, *v*, p. 433, where a daughter is mentioned, too: ‘in the fire the marquesse’s lady, and one of his daughters fell downe in a swound, and were burned. The marquessse himself had opporunitye to have escaped, but seinge his lady and his daughter, whom he loved exceedingly, in that case, said he would die where they died, and embracinge the lady, was burned also with them’.


38 The ships burnt and sunk were all Spanish. The contemporary accounts of the battle can be found in *The Publick Intelligencer*, no. 84 (25 May to 1 June 1657), pp. 1387-91; *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 364 (28 May to 4 June 1657), pp. 7813-17, 7822-26; *An Order of Parliament; with the Consent of His Highness the Lord Protector, for a Day of Publice Thanksgiving . . . for the Great Success God Hath Been Pleased to Give the Navy of This Commonwealth under the Command of General Blake against the Spaniard* (London, 1657). According to Firth, ‘With them [captains and admirals serving under Blake] the prospect of prize-money was the dominant motive. If the frigates could catch the [Spanish] galleons at sea they might be as successful as Stayner had been [at Cadiz in the previous year], and reap an even richer harvest’. When frigates belonging
to Stayner's division captured Spanish vessels and were ready to bring them off, 'Blake sent peremptory orders that these prizes should be burnt, and had to repeat his orders three times before their reluctant captors obeyed'—Last Years, i, pp. 246, 255-56. Due to the virtuous leadership of Blake, 'Though we had received no benefit by it; yet certainly the enemy never had a greater loss'—John Towill Rutt (ed.), Diary of Thomas Burton (London, 1828), ii, p. 142. See also Abbott, iv, pp. 537-38.

39 Nichols, p. 21. I follow Nichols's spelling; Cummins has it as 'Rance', and Kelsey has 'Raunse'.

40 The possible source of this episode is Nichols, pp. 69-70, where Drake gives 'strait charge to all the Symerons (that while they were in his company, they should never hurt any woman, nor man that had not weapon in his hand to doe them hurt, which they earnestly promised, and no lesse faithfully performed)'. Frohock (p. 331) misguidedly points out that the source is The Voyages & Travels of That Renowned Captain, Sir Francis Drake, into the West-Indies, and Round about the World (London, 1683, 1690[?], 1700), p. 9 (the 1683 edn.) or p. 8 (the 1700 edn.), where the author is simply repeating Nichols. The copy of this pamphlet listed in Wing as V747 has the dates '[1652]' on the item card and '[1690]' (handwritten) on the title page, and Frohock accepts the former as the year of its publication. Its seller 'E[ben] Tracy at the Three Bibles on London-Bridge', however, was active only around the turn of the eighteenth century, so 1652 is impossible to confirm (the search result for the publisher 'Tracy Three Bibles' on English Short Title Catalogue, 1470-1800 on CD-ROM [2003]).